

VZCZCXYZ0002
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHLJ #0032/01 0350755
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 040755Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7661
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0080
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USDELMC BRUSSELS BE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCJACC/USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 1205
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LJUBLJANA 000032

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/CE
OSD FOR DASD TOWNSEND
EUCOM FOR AMBASSADOR CANAVAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2020
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [AF](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: INVESTING IN AN ALLY: SUPPORT FOR SLOVENIA'S
EXPANDED MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: A. LJUBLJANA 0001
[1](#)B. LJUBLJANA 0027
[1](#)C. LJUBLJANA-EUR/CE E-MAIL JAN 15 AND SUBSEQUENT
[1](#)D. LETTER FROM SLOVENIAN SHAPE NMR TO US NMR 8 JAN 10

Classified By: CDA Brad Freden, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request; please see paragraph six.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY. Slovenia is at a crucial tipping point in terms of its international engagement. If the country is to successfully deploy an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) in Afghanistan this year, as it has committed itself to do, it will itself require some mentoring as well as a modest investment of U.S. political and logistical support. Embassy Ljubljana's Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC) is leading the effort to get the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) the armored vehicles it needs and to lash up the SAF with the Colorado National Guard for what will initially be a joint mission (ref A). Our Public Affairs Office is working closely with its counterparts in the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs to help the government shape its message to a still-skeptical Slovenian public and parliament (ref B). Most recently, Slovenia has requested U.S. assistance to facilitate the Prime Minister's travel to Afghanistan in March (refs C & D). The Prime Minister's trip is critical to his efforts to ensure public and parliamentary support for Slovenia's first mission "outside the wire" in Afghanistan, and to our efforts to encourage Slovenia to play a more active role internationally. We ask the Department to initiate a request for DoD airlift support based on the justification in paras 3-5 below. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) On January 23, Foreign Minister Zbogar reiterated ref D request to the Charge' d'Affaires. Zbogar noted that Pahor faced calls for withdrawal from Afghanistan by prominent MPs representing two of his government's junior coalition partners, LDS and Zares, and implied that this sentiment was widespread within the rank and file of both parties. The FM argued forcefully that Pahor's trip to Afghanistan was essential in order for the PM to face down opposition to the OMLT within his own coalition government. Pahor must also rebut criticism from the news media that Slovenia is asking its soldiers to take on a more dangerous mission while no Slovenian leader has ever set foot in Afghanistan. The request for U.S. support to travel to Afghanistan was not made lightly, Zbogar said; it is critical to Pahor's ability to lead on this issue. Defense Minister Jelusic confirmed

this on January 28, expressing concern about the government's ability to maintain support for the OMLT if Pahor is not able to offer parliament a first-hand assessment of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) Embassy Ljubljana strongly supports the Slovenian request. With the deployment of an OMLT, the number of Slovenian soldiers in Afghanistan will increase by almost 50 percent to approximately 100 soldiers, this from a country with a population of only two million. More importantly, Slovenia will deploy the OMLT without functional caveats for the first time in its history. Putting their troops in harm's way on behalf of NATO is a huge leap for this insular little country. It symbolizes the acceptance of shared responsibility and shared risk in a nation that has, since independence in 1991, been slow to throw off the lingering vestiges of Yugoslav non-alignment and venture beyond its comfortable cocoon of domestic prosperity. With our support, Slovenia could eventually become another Denmark: a small European ally that plays a disproportionately large role internationally. Absent our support, they are more likely to drift toward Austrian-style complacency. The Prime Minister's travel to Afghanistan will shore up this support and create momentum for further international engagement.

¶5. (C) Slovenia currently has approximately six percent of its military deployed abroad on international missions, with the largest contingents in Kosovo (395 soldiers) and Afghanistan (69 soldiers). Within the MOD and SAF, there are scores of IMET graduates at all levels, from the CHOD on down, who gained both the strategic vision and tactical skills necessary for this deployment during IMET and other

bilateral training. They and their colleagues welcome the opportunity to take on a more challenging mission in ISAF. Once the OMLT deployment is accepted by the public, we see opportunities for Slovenia to further increase its contribution to ISAF by, for example, deploying its state-of-the-art NATO-certified field hospital. At a minimum, the lifting of caveats will push all levels of the government to articulate publicly, for the first time, why Slovenia should accept certain risks on behalf of a larger international cause. Pahor's trip to Afghanistan -- the first ever by a Slovenian head of government -- is critical in this regard. With minimal investment on our part, we can build on the current momentum to ensure that Slovenia's engagement in Afghanistan -- and in NATO operations generally -- becomes self-sustaining.

¶6. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Please initiate a "Request for Assistance for Non-reimbursable Round-trip Travel" for Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor and Defense Minister Ljubica Jelusic from Ljubljana, Slovenia, to Afghanistan for a three-day period in March 2010 to be determined by the availability of USAF assets and in consultation with the Government of Slovenia. In addition to the Minister of Defense, Pahor will be accompanied by 2-4 Slovenian officials and at least one journalist. Charge' d'Affaires requests permission to accompany the Prime Minister. DATT and/or ODC Chief will accompany the MOD.

¶7. (C) Following is the text of the request from the Slovenian National Military Representative at SHAPE to the U.S. NMR, dated 8 January 2010:

"In order to gain better political and public support on our common efforts in Afghanistan, SVN is planning a visit of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Defense with the delegation (together 5 to 10 persons) to Afghanistan. The PM's plan is to visit Afghan President Karzai, COMISAF, COM RC West and SVN contingent in Herat. The visit is planned for a period between 1st and 13th of February in duration of three days (Note: MOD informed us on January 29 that the visit had been postponed until March. End Note.). USA NMR is kindly requested for support to provide air transportation from Europe to Afghanistan (Kabul or Herat) and back to Europe. SVN delegation will not require any additional security arrangements."

18. (C) MOD Jelusic subsequently informed CDA that the Prime Minister wished to delay his requested travel until March to allow more time for planning and owing to the postponement of the Afghan elections. The Prime Minister's office has promised to provide us ASAP with at least two sets of dates during which he would be able to travel.
FREDEN